"middleman," indeed, was and is of even more importance in China than in the West. The purchase and sale of land and the negotiation of betrothals are regularly transacted and the transfer of goods of many descriptions is often accomplished through him. This has not meant, however, the development of wholesale houses or of the commission merchant on any such scale as in the modern West, nor is any close similarity implied to the jobbers, small dealers, and distributors of the Occident.

Weights and measures have been almost as confused and confusing as in medieval Europe. Theoretically the decimal system has prevailed—a great aid in reckoning. In practice, however, it has often been departed from. Thus while in theory one hundred catties (the foreign name for the Chinese *chin)* made one picul (the foreign name for the Chinese *tan)* in practice the number of catties to a picul has varied from commodity to commodity and from city to city. Moreover, the catty also has fluctuated in weight from locality to locality and according to the commodity and the trade. So, too, measures of length have differed with the occupation and the trade. A unit with the same name might be one length for the carpenter, another for the mason, and still another for the tailor. Similarly in areas: the *mou,* which is usually roughly reckoned as a sixth of an English acre, in some regions is only about one-twelfth and in other nearly a third of an acre. This, not unnaturally, has been something of a hindrance to business on anything more than a local scale.

Uncertainty in commerce has been heightened by the absence of fixed prices. As in so much of the rest of the world, each transaction is a trial of wits between purchaser and seller, the one offering much less than he expects to pay, the latter asking

much more than he hopes to get, and the ultimate transaction involving a compromise. The "one price stores" seen of late years in Chinese cities appear to be a Western innovation—although long before the coming of the Westerner some of the larger shops probably had fixed prices (often subject to adjustment by bargaining).

As an aid in computation the Chinese have employed the abacus. The origin and history of this device in China seem uncertain, but apparently it has been known there for centuries.

In some manner the impression has gotten abroad among Westerners that in business the Chinese merchant of the old school has